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ARCTIC REWARDS
AND
THEIR CLAIMANTS.

Price One Shilling.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY C. F. HODGSON,
GOUGH SQUARE, FLEET STREET.

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AND

THEIR CLAIMANTS.

LONDON :
T. HATCHARD, 187, PICCADILLY.

1856.

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ARCTIC REWARDS AND THEIR CLAIMANTS.

SHALL there be another effort to ascertain the fate of Franklin's party, to which we have found the clue, but await the *dénouement*? Certainly not, says *The Times*—and with that fiat, the *Times*-ridden portion of the community is content. The question is thus disposed of to their satisfaction, and they placidly yield assent to whatever the latest Arctic leading article may assume, or prescribe, or dictate. Is *The Times*, then, so distinguished for impartial discussion of Arctic questions, and for supreme jealousy of the national honour, that we can thus unreservedly repose upon its conclusion and accept its *ultimatum*?

Let us see whether there be not something to be said by those who, not the least informed, presume to differ with *The Times*, and to declare that the fate of the Franklin Expedition has *not* yet been disclosed. What say the most distinguished Arctic naval officers?—they ought to know something of the point at issue. Should we count among the

supporters of a final effort to reveal the truth, such men as have lately come back from the work they desire to renew, if no good cause could be shown for their earnest remonstrances against inaction? And would the arguments and desires of these gallant officers receive the hearty support and encouragement of the Geographical Society, with Admiral Beechey (himself a veteran in icy exploration) as their President and leader, backed up by a host of well-known professional and scientific names,—if they conceived, or for a moment admitted, that there was *nothing* more for us to learn, and that we might fold our hands and say that it is an unfathomable mystery?

The "mystery" is hugged only by those who say it *shall* be one; for Dr. Rae has produced self-evident and indisputable proofs of the route of the "Erebus" and "Terror," no less than of that of a party despatched from the Expedition; and we can track it, if we will, through its last stage.

We proceed to state briefly the amount of the information brought home by Dr. Rae in November, 1854; disentangling what is obviously traditional from that which is supported by proof, and avoiding geographical details and nomenclature. We have before us Dr. Rae's latest map (published by Arrow-smith), on which his track in 1854 and his dates are minutely laid down, together with his Official Report, printed in the Blue Book of 1855: our data therefore are unimpeachable, and open to all. We may further premise, that Dr. Rae's object was the

survey of a part of the Arctic coast, undertaken at the expense of the Hudson's Bay Company, and had no reference whatever to the Franklin Expedition, as he stated in a letter to *The Times* before starting.

He commenced his journey from Repulse Bay early in the spring of 1854, and on arriving on the 20th of April at Pelly Bay, on his way to the Western Water at the mouth of the Fish River, he took pains to communicate with a party of Esquimaux, seventeen in number, of whom he writes:—"They would give us no information on which any reliance could be placed, and none of them would consent to accompany us for a day or two, although I promised to reward them liberally. Apparently there was a great objection to our travelling across the country in a westerly direction. Finding it was their object to puzzle the interpreter and mislead us, I declined purchasing more than a piece of seal from them, and sent them away,—not however without some difficulty, as they lingered about with the hope of stealing something, and, notwithstanding our vigilance, succeeded in abstracting from one of the sledges a few pounds of biscuit and grease."

Whether it was the object of the Esquimaux to "puzzle" the interpreter, or that of the interpreter to "puzzle" Dr. Rae, can only be conjectured by the result. The puzzled interpreter makes a desperate attempt, the very next morning, to desert to his countrymen, and is only overtaken "after a sharp race of four or five miles." "He was in a great

"fright," continues Dr. Rae, "when we came up with him, and was crying like a child, but expressed his readiness to return, and pleaded sickness as an excuse for his conduct." ("Sickness," after a sharp race of four or five miles !)

Resuming their march to the westward, they were followed and joined by a native belonging to the party of the day before, who had been absent seal-hunting, but being anxious to see them had followed up their track. This man proved "very communicative," and was the first to disclose the fearful tragedy which has been published by Dr. Rae.

Two facts in this opening part of his narrative are remarkable. First, the seventeen Esquimaux seen on the 20th, could not have been ignorant of the facts disclosed on the following day by the "very communicative" member of their party, since Dr. Rae, on his way back, afterwards purchased a silver fork and spoon at this same spot; and they had done all they could to dissuade him from pursuing his way westward, that is, towards the Fish River. The second noteworthy point is the attempted desertion of the Esquimaux interpreter, coupled with the fact, that he had, on the previous day, been sent with one of the men to visit the Esquimaux encampment, while Dr. Rae with the rest of the party remained behind. Will Dr. Rae assure us that, instead of being tempted by illness to leave him, the cupidity of his interpreter (who had doubtless seen and learned more at the encampment than he chose

to communicate,) was not rather stimulated by the reports of his countrymen, of plunder such as had never before been within reach of their nation, and that his tears did not flow from a bitter sense of the loss of the treasures he had been about to share ?

Dr. Rae, having regained his interpreter, proceeded, in company with his communicative ally, on his way westward on his geographical mission ; and on the 27th reached the northern face of the American Continent, in the corner where it takes a sudden turn to the north, and assumes the name of Boothia. Before him lay the opening of the Great Fish River. He stood, in fact, on the Eastern shore of that opening, into which Point Ogle projects from the western boundary of the river. Point Ogle was the locality fixed by Dr. Rae himself (from the Esquimaux testimony) as the spot whereon thirty bodies, and the graves of some of the party, were lying ; it was distant fifty miles as the crow flies ; the intervening ice (27th April : see Report) was firm, and would remain so for many weeks to come. Yet Dr. Rae was not moved to visit either that spot, or Montreal Island, which lay a little higher up the frozen stream ! He was, by his own showing, possessed of the important information (see Blue Book, p. 831) "that a party of white men (Kabloonas) had perished from want of food some distance to the westward, and not far from a large river containing many falls and rapids," which he says could be none other than Back's Great Fish River ; and he had then before him, by the evidence of his own journal, at

least a portion of the details of the catastrophe, which he has strung together in one page of his Report under the date of the 21st April. Was there not here enough to stimulate curiosity, and enlist exertion in order to arrive at some certainty? But with Dr. Rae these ordinary motives were either powerless, or must have yielded to others of greater influence; for, from the point he reached on the 27th of April (near the mouth of a small stream, named Castor and Pollux), he set off with the interpreter and a Cree hunter (leaving the remaining two men to await his return to this spot), not to the *westward*, but to explore the coast to the *northward*; which, however, he failed to pursue as far as he intended, and returned to the spot where he had left his men on the 11th May. Again, one would have supposed that, frustrated in the geographical object of his Expedition (as stated in his Report), Dr. Rae would have occupied the time thus remaining in at least an attempt to search into the truth of what he had heard. Point Ogle was once more within a two or three days' journey; and the Spring migration of the Esquimaux to the sea-coast in this neighbourhood, for the seal fishery, rendered communication with them as easy as it was certain. He had but to put out his hand, and the secret involving the fate of his countrymen, if not the rescue of some of them, might be wrenched from the fastnesses which had hitherto concealed it. And what did Dr. Rae do? He returned to Pelly Bay, and thence to England, and

now claims £10,000 (vide the Gazette of January 22nd) under the 3rd clause of the Government announcement, which is thus worded :—" And, 3rd, The sum of £10,000 to any party or parties, who, in the judgment of the Board of Admiralty, should, *by virtue of his or their efforts*, first succeed in ascertaining their fate."

So far from making any " efforts" to follow up the clue so unexpectedly placed in his hands, Dr. Rae does not appear even to have availed himself of the opportunities afforded by his intercourse with the Esquimaux to visit their encampments. He never visited the encampment of his communicative ally of the 21st April; and on his return to Pelly Bay on the 20th of May, although he was perplexed by the initials on the fork and spoon which he purchased from the party, he appears never to have taken the trouble to visit their huts, although they were distant certainly not more than a few hours' march.

On these two occasions, he sent his men to seek the encampments; and it appears evident that, on one or both of them, his " active and intelligent" follower, Mistegan, " one of his best men" (we quote Dr. Rae's testimony to his character), drew conclusions from what he saw and heard at the Esquimaux lodges very different from those of his chief. Mistegan, on his return to the Rossville Missionary Settlement, where his family resides, appears to have communicated his impressions to the Rev. Thomas Hurlburt, the clergyman stationed at that Mission, as we learn from a paragraph in the

"Toronto Christian Guardian," of January 3rd,
 1855. "The Rev. Thomas Hurlburt, of Rossville
 " Mission, Hudson's Bay Territory, in his Journal,
 " dated Sept. 17th, writes: 'Dr. Rae has just re-
 " turned, and has found traces of Sir John Franklin.
 " One of our members here was on this expedition,
 " and has made his family happy by his safe return.
 " His name is Thomas Mistegan. I had a long
 " talk with him on the subject; he gave me an
 " interesting account of their journey, and their
 " wintering in a snow house, where they had six
 " weeks of constant night. In March last, they
 " started on the ice to the North, and were thirty-
 " seven days on their northern journey. They were
 " one hundred miles beyond the region inhabited by
 " the Esquimaux, but where they still found the
 " tracks of the musk ox. Sir John and his party
 " are dead, but perhaps one or two of the men may
 " be still alive; and amongst the Esquimaux Sir
 " John's watch, all in pieces, with his silver spoons,
 " knives, and forks, were found. The ship was a
 " great godsend to these people; and they now
 " all have good sleds, spears, canoes, &c. of oak
 " wood.' "

The incidental and matter-of-fact way in which
 the ships, and their having been visited by the
 Esquimaux, are here alluded to, together with the
 possibility that some individuals of the lost party
 might still be living amongst them, furnish addi-
 tional motives for distrusting the accuracy of Dr.
 Rae's version of the Esquimaux report. Our sus-

picious, too, are certainly not in any way diminished by the fact, now generally known, that Ouligbuck, the Interpreter, has a second time absconded from his employers, having during the past winter deserted from Fort Churchill for the purpose of rejoining his friends in the North. Dr. Rae, evidently unprepared for the nature of Mistegan's revelations, wrote to the *Athenæum* to explain that the oak sleds, spears, &c. may have been obtained from the "Victory," abandoned twenty-four years ago by Sir John Ross in Prince Regent's Inlet! It is one thing to make such a statement—it is another to get people to believe it. The writer of the present pages knows something of the Arctic regions and of Arctic voyagers, and has a fair toleration for Arctic marvels; but Dr. Rae's hypothesis, he must confess, fairly exceeds the limits of his faith.

The very extraordinary conduct of a practised Arctic traveller like Dr. Rae, in thus deliberately abstaining to step out of his way (at the very outset, be it remembered, of his journey) for the very object which had originated his two previous Arctic journeys, and to which, therefore, he cannot be supposed to have been wholly indifferent, has awakened various speculations. Point Ogle, as we have seen, was on two occasions distant not more than sixty miles to the westward; and as he told us, at a late Meeting of the Geographical Society, that he frequently travelled thirty and thirty-five miles a-day, there were but two days' march to attain the point; yet, instead of doing this, he turns his back upon the Fish River,

and wanders north on geographical discovery. If, guessing at motives, we have to choose between inhuman indifference and a cautious avoidance of the natives at the mouth of this River, we may prefer the latter view, and allow that Dr. Rae might have cause to be careful in trusting himself with his small party amongst savages, who may have ill-treated, robbed, murdered, and who perhaps still hold among them some solitary individual of the strong party which Sir John Franklin despatched to the Fish River, doubtless in order to send home the history of his dire necessity. To the same feeling, which is to be considered as by no means derogatory to their courage, may be imputed the subsequent hasty advance and retreat of Mr. Anderson upon the Fish River, and the extreme unwillingness of the Hudson's Bay people to winter at the mouth of the river, infested as it is by Esquimaux. Pride, no doubt, prevents the candour we could wish for on this point. But we must admit that caution would be suggested by the report of the voyage of Sir George Back down this river, from Dr. King's Report of which we will quote a passage which appears to us also fearfully significant of the treatment and possible fate of the unhappy party from the "Erebus" and "Terror :"—

"Just on opening the view of Lake Franklin" (in the stream of the Fish River, not far below the estuary upon the coast), says Dr. King, "the Esquimaux were perceived flying with the utmost consternation to the far-distant hills, where they

" could be just made out with our telescopes as
 " living objects. Their tents were deserted, and
 " their canoes secreted,—a conduct so widely different
 " from what had been expected from our first inter-
 " view, that we were convinced something extra-
 " ordinary must have taken place; nor could this
 " be in any way accounted for until after our arrival
 " in England, when it was ascertained that the
 " three men despatched to Mount Barrow, whose
 " evasive manner at the time gave indications of
 " something unusual having occurred, had fallen in
 " during their march with a party of Esquimaux,
 " and an affray ensued, in which three of the natives
 " lost their lives. The men, it appeared, having
 " surrounded a small lake to secure some wild-fowl,
 " were surprised by a party of Esquimaux, and at
 " once retreated. The natives, in following them,
 " fired a few arrows; upon which the men turned
 " and discharged their guns, killed three of the
 " party, and might probably have wounded others;
 " it being a practice with the voyageurs to load their
 " fowling-pieces with two balls, so as to give them
 " a double chance of securing their game. The
 " party, thoroughly dismayed at seeing their country-
 " men fall around them, fled in the greatest disorder;
 " and the men, equally alarmed, betook themselves
 " to flight also."*

In the above passage, we obtain perhaps a clue
 to the avoidance by Dr. Rae of any proximity to or

* King's Narrative of an Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish
 River in Search of Sir John Ross, vol. ii. p. 69.

communication with the Esquimaux of the Fish River; and, for the credit of his humanity, we will hope it was the real and only cause of his precipitate retreat.

On his arrival in England, the public were thrilled with alternate horror and disgust at the revelations reported by Dr. Rae; but while their credulity was heavily taxed by some of the details of his narration, the main fact was confirmed by the relics he purchased from the Esquimaux and brought home. These indisputably tell that a party from the "Erebus" and "Terror" had reached the North American coast at the bottom of Victoria Strait, having apparently left the ships at no great distance, probably to the north of King William Island, in the tidal water-way between Barrow Strait and the channel lying along the north coast of America. We decline to accept the miserable details upon which Dr. Rae permits himself to dwell; for we conceive the authority of his interpreter to be without any value, unless supported by incidental proof.

Perceiving, however, that the testimony of Dr. Rae needed confirmation, that the fate of the Franklin Expedition remained unascertained, and that all we possessed was a clue by which to solve it, the Admiralty did not resist the universal feeling which demanded that his imperfect revelations should receive that investigation which he had made no effort to effect by his personal observations at the spot. The prosecution of this object was committed to the Hudson's Bay Company, whose jealousy

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guarded territory embraced the entire field of coast upon which the imperilled parties would take refuge; and by the Blue Book of last year we find that not only were they unrestricted by Her Majesty's Government in the expenditure which might be required to ensure the perfect efficiency of the undertaking, but also that liberal payment was promised to the servants of the Company, and special rewards for any acts of daring and distinguished merit. Thus unfettered, encouraged, nay, enjoined, we shall see how they executed the mission they accepted, the result of which is before us in the meagre and unsatisfactory Report of Mr. Anderson, the Commander of the party sent down the Fish River. We would be just, however, to Mr. Anderson, who did perhaps all that could be expected with a party embarked in canoes of birch bark (of which Mr. Anderson, moreover, expressly says in his Report that they were of inferior quality), for he descended the Fish River nearly to its mouth, and returned immediately. He had no interpreter, and consequently was unable to communicate with the Esquimaux except by signs. But at the rapids above the estuary he found "various articles belonging to a boat," in the enumeration of which occurs "a letter-clip with the date 1843," which certainly does *not* come under the category of equipment for a boat or travelling party. On the following day Montreal Island was reached, and searched successfully, for within a number of Esquimaux *caches* were found various articles belonging to a boat or

ship, such as chain-hooks, chisels, blacksmith's shovel, cold chisel, &c. &c.; in another spot, "a large quantity of chips, shavings, ends of plank, of pine, elm, ash, oak, and mahogany;" "and on one of them was found the word 'Terror' carved." It was evident that this was the spot where the boat was cut up by the Esquimaux. Nothing at Point Ogle; since a morsel of cod line, and a strip of cotton two inches long, can hardly be regarded as a proof that the party had been there. In his Report, Mr. Anderson fills up the links necessary to connect these strange traces, by assuming all, that Dr. Rae has reported, to be gospel; but with the facts before our eyes, we maintain that the evidence of one Hudson's Bay *employé* fails in establishing that of the other. Dr. Rae confidently reports, on third-hand Esquimaux testimony, the whereabouts of some thirty corpses, and the graves of others. He is also minute in describing the abundance and the waste of ammunition. Neither bodies, nor graves, nor clothes, nor arms, nor ammunition, were found by Mr. Anderson. There are precisely such articles as might have formed the equipment of a boat of the large size indicated by the variety of woods employed in its construction, but which would be abandoned by a party commencing a long and weary march.

On the other hand, the chain-hooks and the "letter-clip" each tell their own tale. Neither would be rescued from a sinking ship, or a drifting one; and naval men pronounce confidently upon

the first, that they are never used either in a boat or sledge; and infer, therefore, that the ships were near, and have been visited by the Esquimaux; an inference borne out, as we have seen, by the direct testimony of one of Dr. Rae's party.

From the date of seeing the first traces of the Expedition (at the rapids above the estuary), Mr. Anderson occupied nine days in search. He had no communication with natives above the rapids; and it is to be especially remarked, that here, as at the previous village, the *men* were not forthcoming. He tells us the women were very intelligent; but without an interpreter, and ignorant as the whole party were of the language, can their intelligence, or the signs which Mr. Anderson understood as confirming the story related by his brother officer Dr. Rae, convince us of anything for which we do not possess a surer proof? We have carefully studied Mr. Anderson's Report; and putting his theories on one side, and dealing alone with his facts, we cannot see that he has done more than confirm thus much of the original Esquimaux tale, namely, that a party with a boat *did* reach British North America within the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, (thus, by the way, accomplishing the last link wanting to the discovery of the North West Passage); and that, that party was from the missing ships 'Erebus' and 'Terror.' Mr. Anderson and Dr. Rae, we maintain, give us no proof of the party having *perished* at the mouth of the Fish River, or in the manner the Esquimaux said they had; they do not decide the

question of what has become of the 'Erebus' and 'Terror;' and they tell us nothing of the eighty men and officer whom the Esquimaux do not pretend to have seen, who, we know, made up the original complement of the missing Expedition.

It is the declared opinion of some of the most intelligent naval Arctic officers, that the party which reached the mouth of the Fish River was carefully equipped from the resources of the two ships, in order to barter their way through the native tribes, or to force it by dint of numbers. And if so, what more likely routes could they have pursued, than up the three great streams, the Great Fish, the Coppermine, and the Mackenzie, leading into the heart of the fur territories of the Hudson's Bay Company? Each of these streams has probably been visited by detachments similar to that reported to have perished at the Fish River, and the entire Expedition may thus have attempted in separate parties, and by separate routes, to reach the settlements of the Hudson's Bay Company. It is deeply to be deplored that, immediately upon receiving the news of Captain Collinson's safety, the Admiralty should have countermanded the order to send a party down the Mackenzie as well as the Fish River, and limited their instructions to the very least modicum of search.

It is, and was, also a matter of painful regret to all who have the rescue of our devoted countrymen most deeply at heart, that Sir Robert Maclure, when following the long line of coast already delineated by

Franklin and others, abstained in August, 1850, to investigate the communications made to him at Point Warren, east of the Mackenzie.

We find, from a despatch dated August 30, 1850, that on deciding to land at this point, with the intention of forwarding his earlier despatches through the natives, who were seen on the beach, he was astonished by observing that, with the most menacing and furious gesticulations, they attempted to prevent the execution of his intentions. Having landed, however, and succeeded, by means of his able interpreter, Mr. Miertching, the Moravian clergyman, in pacifying them sufficiently, they learned from the Chief that the whole tribe had departed in their baidars, with their most valuable property, at five in the morning, as soon as the ship was first seen,—he (the chief) being left alone with his son, because, as he alleged, it would have been undignified to retire when danger was apprehended. He assured them they had seen no white men; in contradiction to which declaration we find the following passage in Captain Maclure's despatch, a few lines beyond:—"Observing an old flat brass button "suspended from the ear of the Chief, he said it was "taken from a white man, who had been killed by "one of his tribe, who went away in his kyack "when the vessel was seen. The white man be- "longed to a party which had landed at Point "Warren, and there built a house; nobody knew "how they came, as they had no boat, but that

" they went inland; the man killed had strayed
 " from the party, and that he and his son buried
 " him upon a hill at a little distance. The only
 " answer we could obtain as to the probable time
 " when this transaction took place was, ' that it
 " might be last year, or when I was a child.' To
 " examine the grave I was very anxious, but was
 " prevented by the state of the weather becoming
 " foggy with fresh breeze, which compelled our
 " immediate return to the ship; so, making them
 " a few presents, we parted on very amicable terms.
 " This intelligence appeared of so important a nature
 " with respect to the white men on the Point, that
 " I determined to remain until it became sufficiently
 " clear to land and examine the house, which might
 " possibly contain some indication of the missing
 " Expedition. This detained me eighteen hours, but
 " to have left with a doubt would have been a sub-
 " ject of perpetual regret."

The houses (for there proved to be two of them)
 were examined on the following morning, and found
 rotten and old, and without any mark to give infor-
 mation. Sir Robert Maclure returned to his ship;
 but we conceive that he would now be a more en-
 viable man had he run the risk of being detained
 (from what? the pursuing a North-west passage!)
 for even another eighteen hours, could he thereby
 have secured so deeply important an object as the
 examination of the grave, to which all the more
 value must be attached, from the fact (generally

known, we believe) that amongst the natives who were seen from the ship, was one in European clothing.

The Hudson's Bay Company were indeed early instructed by the Admiralty to take such measures as would have ensured the safety, or lives, of any people reaching the northern coast of America, and were directed to charge the expenses attendant on such steps to the Admiralty. They had three great streams issuing from the heart of their territory to the Arctic Sea, whither, as we have above observed, it was natural that shipwrecked or starving navigators would make their way, hoping for—perhaps *sure* of—relief in a British Possession. How different might have been the fate of the unhappy fugitives from the 'Erebus' and 'Terror,' had this Company only, each year, sent to the mouth of each of these rivers one small travelling party! But, true to the instincts of monopoly, they have waited until, having a license of trade to renew and favour to propitiate with the Government, they enter when too late upon their appointed task, and with aims which those who know them best estimate at their true value.

Hardly had the public heart of England been stirred by the intelligence of the fatal catastrophe at the Great Fish River, when they stepped in to monopolize the credit of clearing the last sad page of the mystery which had so long interested the civilized world. Freely and liberally supplied with public money for the execution of so honoured and

sacred a trust, urged by every motive of humanity and honour to fulfil, to the utmost their accepted mission, what has been the result? A paltry expedition of three birch-bark canoes of an inferior description, one of which was speedily disabled—all incapable of approaching or venturing upon an open sea, and manned by a party not one of whom was capable of taking a common astronomical observation; a flying visit to the estuary of the Fish River, not even extended to the sea; a hasty scramble into the remains of a solitary boat; and a few meagre dribblets of apocryphal information from a camp of Esquimaux women, communicated by signs, and eked out by imagination.

Scarcely, however, had the Report of Mr. Anderson reached England, when a *Gazette* notice proclaims that Dr. Rae has stepped forward to claim the Admiralty reward of £10,000. For what? For ascertaining the fate of Franklin? No:—for *not* ascertaining it, when the solution of the mystery lay within sixty miles of his path; and for returning, and thereby entailing upon the public the cost, and upon other men the risk, of completing what he left undone. Dr. Rae has been ill-advised in making such a claim, involving, as it does, not alone the paltry consideration of the reward of a sum of money, but the far more important question, whether our account with Franklin and his gallant followers is now and for ever to be closed. The Hudson's Bay officer has compelled those who honoured him for his valuable contributions to geo-

graphical discovery, to examine more narrowly the position he is entitled to hold in the solution of the great problem with which it is his ambition to connect his name; and his claims, now that the examination of them has been provoked, turn out to be unfounded.

By the merest accident, and at the very commencement of his journey, and not towards its close, he discovers traces and receives information, of the most valuable and stimulating character, from a party of wandering Esquimaux. But although holding the clue to the solution of the great mystery in his hands, he makes not the slightest effort to follow it up. True, he may not have known of the reward: we can readily believe this, or he would have acted otherwise. But, aware for the first time, on arriving in England, of the market value of the neglected information, he claims, on the strength of his third-hand intelligence—the Report of a Report, based in all its particulars upon hearsay—the reward due to personal *efforts* and investigation alone. The Esquimaux are the sole authorities on which Dr. Rae does or can rely—sole discoverers and sole depositaries of all the information we possess; and in the name of common justice, if they can but free themselves from the charge of murder, let the reward go to them, if anywhere.

It has become the more necessary to look narrowly into the grounds of Dr. Rae's claims, as an attempt has been made to justify the deplorable

negligence exhibited by him in following up the traces of the lost party, on the plea that the information obtained on his outward journey was not sufficiently precise to enable him to identify the locality of the catastrophe, and that all traces of the remains of the sufferers would necessarily have been obliterated by the snow which at the time covered the ground. Dr. Rae's duty was clearly to communicate with the Esquimaux at the mouth of the Fish River, from whom the intelligence was originally derived, who would have been bound, in support of their own statements, to have guided him to the spot where the relics of the party were to be found. There could have been no obstacle to this communication arising from the ground being covered with snow, but rather the reverse, provided always that he entertained no fears for the safety of his party, and had any faith in his own recorded opinion that "no violence had been offered to the sufferers by the natives."

As regards the alleged deficiency of information, the plea is at once disposed of by Dr. Rae's own letter to the Admiralty, dated "Repulse Bay," (Blue Book, p. 831,) an extract from which has been already given at page 9; where he expressly states that it was at Pelly Bay (and evidently on his outward journey) that he obtained from the "communicative" Esquimaux intelligence both of the fate of the party and the spot where they perished. In his official Report, also, the whole of the details of the catastrophe are given under the date of the 21st

of April, when he first met the natives at this place.

Dr. Rae, then, wrote for truth and not for reward ; of his pretensions to which he does not appear to have been aware until his return to England.

On this circumstance, indeed, hangs the solution of the whole mystery—the clue to his inexplicable conduct both then and since—the determination to sacrifice everything to geographical discovery, and the ambition of completing the delineation of the Northern coast-line of America *before* the reward was known to him—the sudden sacrifice of geography to humanity *after* it was known,—and the forced constructions and lamentable shifts to reconcile neglected duties with new-born visions of honours and wealth. “He came home to stop further Expeditions, rather than wait a year to visit the spot.” Well! he did *not* stop further Expeditions ; for another was necessarily and immediately sent out to test the truth of his Report, and make further search and investigation. The command of it was offered to himself, but declined ; and now, when those return who did not shrink from the hardships and risks of the undertaking, he steps in to claim the fruits of their exertions.

Dr. Rae is fully aware that, in advancing his ignoble claims, he is doing what in him lies to quench the search so long and so ardently followed, the object of which—stripped perhaps of some of its glory, but never to be stripped of its obligations—is now at last fairly within our grasp. The necessity of

sending out a vessel to complete the work, now limited to a single channel, and carried out to its last stage, but not perfected, is well known to be advocated, not only by all our leading naval Arctic officers, but also by such high authorities as Beechey, Murchison, the venerable Beaufort, and a host of others. It was urged upon the Admiralty at the time that the Fish River party was organized; and to their refusal may be attributed, still more than to the inefficient expedition of the Hudson's Bay Company, the miserable doubt in which we are still left, and the necessity of doing at last what might have been done long ago. The Admiralty can no longer evade the obligation to send out a vessel upon the plea which has hitherto availed them—that the Fish River party would tell us all there was to learn; for the possibility that some individuals may still survive among other tribes of Esquimaux, is the publicly-expressed opinion of others besides Sir Robert Maclure, who stated as much at the Geographical Society last June. And to those who may choose to regard this judgment as chimerical, there remains as an argument in favour of sending out a party for the search of the channel and coasts to the north of the Fish River, the undisputed importance, in a scientific point of view (putting aside the deeper claims of feeling), of the records to be obtained by discovering the wrecks of the ships, or the graves of those who never left the spot where these were arrested. No one, we think, can thoroughly sift the evidence to be obtained

from the nature of the relics, without concluding that the ships were not far distant; and inasmuch as a portion of their crews have, unaided by us, reached the dominions of our Sovereign, and there probably perished miserably by famine, or by the hands of savages, it surely behoves us to do what, had they lived, they would have urged us to do—namely, solve the fate of their remaining comrades.

And if it be necessary to combat the vain fears of those who persuade themselves and others that fearful risk to life and health, and certain suffering, are entailed upon all those despatched upon an Arctic mission, let us point, if they will but look, at the records of the searching expeditions, manned by volunteers who have seldom contented themselves with one trial, and on their return eagerly pressed to be again employed in Arctic service. Let them search the sick lists (when there has been any sick list to search); and con the tables of mortality in Arctic service, which show, by the stubborn evidence of figures, that the average of deaths is lower in that service than in *any other*.

And when officers who have been already tried in the work urge upon us that the clue they vainly sought has now been put into our hands, then indeed we may feel conscience free in praying that the road they have so zealously and repeatedly pursued should not be barred against them at the very moment that the reward of success lies within their grasp. With officers such as are pressing forward to this work, who combine the enterprise of

youth with the experience of years in the Arctic Seas, no lives would be risked beyond those points of danger which the past tells us may be met, endured, and mastered with comparative impunity. It is the very persons who have been before, who most zealously press for another and final effort, in opposition to those few who would weigh the solution of a question involving common humanity and national honour, as they would any trivial concern of mere every-day life.

Sir Charles Wood may consider a paltry vote of £800 for a monument in Greenwich Hospital to these martyrs of science—these first discoverers of the North-West Passage—an all-sufficient acknowledgment of the costly sacrifice they freely offered, when forging the last link of the North-West Passage with their lives.* But there are others who would claim for these heroes—who have died in the nation's service as surely as if slain at Alma or at Inkermann, and who must therefore hold a place in the tender and noble heart of that Royal Lady whose sympathy overflows towards her suffering subjects—that something more should be done. They would not see the task of reaching their last resting-place shuffled off upon a trading company, but that the Service they have adorned should itself be the active instrument to rescue their remains, and do honour to their memories. To the friends

* See the "Memoir of Sir John Franklin," by Sir John Richardson, in the latest (8th) edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," vol. x.

and brother officers of Franklin and his companions should be confided the touching and noble mission of gathering up the last recorded words and written documents of the dead, and bringing them home to the country, of whose history they form a part, and to the friends who will cherish them as their dearest treasures.

We believe this view of things has only to be represented to the public to recommend itself to their understandings, and to touch their hearts.